

REMARKS

The Examiner indicated that Claims 8 and 9 appear to be duplicates of each other. In response, Applicant has cancelled Claim 9, without prejudice.

Claims 5-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over German Patent No. DE 4239475 (hereinafter DE '475) in view of Japanese Publication No. 2002-059711 to Iwamura (hereinafter JP '711) and further in view of Japanese Publication No. 07-164829 to Shirai et al. (hereinafter JP '829). Applicant has cancelled Claim 9, without prejudice, thereby rendering this rejection moot with respect to this claim. However, with respect to Claims 5-8, 10, and 11, Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

Applicant respectfully submits that the cited references fail to disclose or suggest all of the claimed features of the present invention. More specifically, Applicant respectfully submits that the cited references fail to disclose or suggest a pneumatic tire that includes, *inter alia*, a straight main groove, an arcuate curved main groove on each side of the straight main groove, and a circumferential auxiliary groove provided in each tread shoulder region, in combination with a plurality of inclined grooves that are all “inclined in the same direction with respect to said associated auxiliary groove, and further wherein an incline direction of said inclined grooves, when considered from said tread center region to each of said tread shoulder regions, is opposite to that of said predetermined direction of rotation,” as defined in amended independent Claim 11. Support for the amendment to Claim 11 can be found in the Specification as originally filed in, for example, paragraphs[0024] and [0029] and in Figure 1.

Applicant's Figure 1 shows one example of an embodiment defined by Claim 11, including straight main groove 1, an arcuate curved main groove 3 on each side of the straight main groove 1, and a circumferential auxiliary groove 4 provided in each tread shoulder region Ts, in combination with a plurality of inclined grooves 5a, 5b that are all "inclined in the same direction with respect to said associated auxiliary groove [4], and further wherein an incline direction of said inclined grooves, when considered from said tread center region [Tc] to each of said tread shoulder regions [Ts], is opposite to that of said predetermined direction of rotation [arrow R]," as defined in Claim 11.

In contrast, the cited references, alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest all of the claimed features of Claim 11 because, even assuming *arguendo* that auxiliary grooves 10(B) of JP '711 could be added to the configuration of DE '475, the features that most closely resemble the claimed inclined grooves in DE '475 are not all inclined in the same direction with respect to their associated auxiliary groove, where that incline direction is opposite to a predetermined direction of rotation, as defined in amended independent Claim 11. More specifically, as can be seen in Figure 1 of DE '475, the extensions of large elbows 4 that reach edge 5 are inclined in two different directions with respect to a circumferential groove, as are the large elbows that reach opposite edge 6. Similarly, Figure 6 of DE '475 also shows how the extensions of large elbows 4 that reach edge 5 are inclined in two different directions, as are the extensions of the large elbows on the opposite side. Thus, DE '475 fails to disclose or suggest all of the features defined in

independent Claim 11. Additionally, none of the other cited references remedies this deficiency.

Moreover, the combination of features defined in independent Claim 11 results in a beneficial synergy. More specifically, by combining inclined grooves that are all inclined in the same direction with respect to an associated auxiliary groove, in a pneumatic tire having a predetermined direction of rotation, with an incline direction of the inclined grooves, when considered from the tread center region to each of the tread shoulder regions, that is opposite to that of the predetermined direction of rotation, the resulting tire demonstrates remarkable drainage performance.

Accordingly, as all of the claimed features of proposed amended independent Claim 11 are not disclosed or suggested in the cited references, Applicants request that the Examiner withdraw this §103 rejection of independent Claim 11 and associated dependent Claims 5-8 and 10.

Claim 12 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over DE '475 in view of JP '711 and JP '829, and further in view of JP 03-074208 (hereinafter JP '208). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 12 depends from independent Claim 11, and therefore includes all of the features of Claim 11, plus additional features. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that this §103 rejection of dependent Claim 12 be withdrawn considering the above remarks directed to independent Claim 11, and also because JP '208 does not remedy the deficiencies discussed above, nor was it relied upon as such.

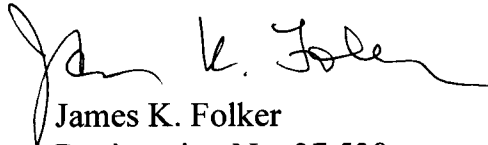
Additionally, Applicants also request the withdrawal of this §103 rejection of dependent Claim 12 because the cited references, alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest a tire in which each of the arcuate main grooves are formed to be in a see-through state. Even assuming *arguendo* that the grooves on the left-hand side of Figure 9 of DE '475 are formed in a see-through state (either as shown in DE '475 or as modified by JP '208), the grooves on the right-hand side of Figure 9 of DE '475 are clearly not formed in a see-through state. Nor is there any disclosure or suggestion in DE '475, or in any of the other cited references, to make these grooves on the right-hand side into a see-through state. Accordingly, the proposed combination also lacks, *inter alia*, a tire in which each of the arcuate main grooves are formed in a see-through state, as defined in amended dependent Claim 12. In the tire of dependent Claim 12, this feature, in combination with the other claimed features of associated independent Claim 1, result in a tire in which the noise buffering capability is improved, while a remarkable water discharge capability is also present. Such a combination of benefits is not found in the cited references, either alone or in combination with each other.

For all of the above reasons, Applicant requests reconsideration and allowance of the claimed invention. Should the Examiner be of the opinion that a telephone conference would aid in the prosecution of the application, or that outstanding issues exist, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned.

If a Petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) for an extension of time for response is required to make the attached response timely, it is hereby petitioned under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) for an extension of time for response in the above-identified application for the period required to make the attached response timely. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required to this Application under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 07-2069.

Respectfully submitted,

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